

International Education: My Lai and the Enforcement of International Humanitarian Law

This lesson is constructed to take one to two days, depending upon the number of activities selected.

Reference Material: *Exploring Humanitarian Law Educational Pack for Teachers and Learners*, American Red Cross, 2002.

I. Content:

I want my students to understand (or be able to):

- A. The basic rules of the Geneva Convention, especially those dealing with the treatment of civilians.
- B. Basic terms dealing with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) – **See Student Handout #1.**
- C. Some issues and dilemmas involved in the implementation and enforcement of IHL.
- D. The events that took place before and during the My Lai incident.
- E. The actions taken by U.S. Military and U.S. government officials to enforce IHL.

II. Prerequisites:

In order to fully appreciate this lesson, the student must know:

- A. IHL, specifically the Geneva Conventions.
- B. The context of the Vietnam War.
- C. The circumstances and conditions faced by U.S. military personnel operating in Vietnam.

III. Instructional Objective:

The student will:

- A. Contemplate the various ways which human beings respond to pressure in a combat situation
- B. Evaluate the actions taken by a variety of U.S. military and government officials.

IV. Materials and Equipment

Teacher: Copy of the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law (**Student Handout #1**)
Copy of My Lai incident background (**Teacher Handout #1**)
Copy of Military Assistance Command Vietnam Pocket Card and Immediate Chain of Command at My Lai (**Teacher Handout #2**)
Copy of the “What Happened Cards” (**Teacher Handout #3**)

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- Student:**
- Copy of My Lai incident – afterwards: What happened within the army (**Teacher Handout #4**)
 - Copy of My Lai incident – afterwards: Chronology of results (**Teacher Handout #5**)
 - Copy of the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law (**Student Handout #1**)
 - Copy of My Lai incident background (**Teacher Handout #1**)
 - Copy of Military Assistance Command Vietnam Pocket Card and Immediate Chain of Command at My Lai (**Teacher Handout #2**)
 - Copy of the “What Happened Cards” (**Teacher Handout #3**)
 - Copy of My Lai incident – afterwards: What happened within the army (**Teacher Handout #4**)
 - Copy of My Lai incident – afterwards: Chronology of results (**Teacher Handout #5**)

V. **Instructional Procedure:**

- A. The teacher will distribute **Student Handout #1** and with the class read, review and discuss IHL rules for the treatment of civilians.
- B. Following the review the teacher will ask the class what if anything that they have heard about the My Lai incident during the Vietnam War.
- C. The teacher will then distribute and have the students read **Teacher Handout #1** and **Teacher Handout # 3**; ask for general responses from the class.
- D. The teacher will then divide the class in small groups and ask them to discuss any or all of the following questions. The teacher should tell each group to be prepared to share with the class their consensus opinions and/or areas of disagreement.

Questions:

1. **Why did these soldiers inflict this terrible harm on these civilians?**
2. **Why did some soldiers refuse to participate?**
3. **What difference could a bystander make?**
4. **Why does obedience matter in fighting a war?**
5. **Are there times when it is important to obey orders without questions?**
6. **Should soldiers follow unlawful orders?**
7. **What IHL laws were broken by Charlie Company?**

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- E. After 15 minutes the teacher should ask the groups to share their responses.
- F. The teacher should then distribute **Teacher Handout #2** and ask the students if they think the pocket card distributed by the military was adequate or have the class suggest how this card should be used by the chain of command while preparing for battle.
- G. The teacher should then ask the following questions: Who do you think should be accused and tried? For what crimes? Why?
- H. The teacher should then distribute **Teacher Handout #4 and Teacher Handout #5**.
- I. In small groups or as individuals assign the students to list how enforcement of IHL was carried out and how IHL was not carried out. Have students share their responses.
- J. Ask the class the following questions:
Questions:
 - 1. **What choices about enforcement did authorities make?**
 - 2. **Once the cover-up began, why do you think that it was uncovered?**
 - 3. **Are you satisfied with the actions taken by officials?**
 - 4. **Which individuals involved in My Lai, if any, earned your respect and why?**
 - 5. **What do you think the outcomes should have been?**
- K. Assignment: Have each student create the orders for Charlie Company's mission at My Lai as he thinks they should have been given. **OR** Have each student create a pocket card that he thinks would provide military personnel with instructions which would have prevented the My Lai incident or further incidents.
- K. The teacher should ask class members to try and put themselves into the shoes of Charlie Company.
 - 1. They should be asked to speculate about the kinds of feelings which the Charlie Company had before and during the incident at My Lai.
 - 2. Especially they should be asked to consider what the long term consequences of the incident might have been for the individuals who were present that day.

VI. Assessment / Evaluation:

- A. The teacher should include questions concerning IHL and the My Lai incident in the end of unit assessment (**See Teacher Handout #6 for suggested questions**)

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International Humanitarian Law*

VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:

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| 9-12.US2.1.1.2 | Discuss the causes and effects of various conflicts in American History. |
| 9-12.US2.2.1.1 | Develop and interpret different kinds of maps, globes, graphs, charts, databases and models. |
| 9-12.US2.4.3.2 | Provide and evaluate examples of social and political leadership in American history. |
| 9-12.US2.5.1.3 | Explain the significance of principal events in the United States' relations with the world, such as World Wars I and II, formation of the United Nations, Marshall Plan, NATO, Korean and Vietnam Wars, end of the Cold War, and interventions in Latin America. |

VIII. Follow-up or Extension Activities:

- A. Have the students read the 2004 Pulitzer Prize winning articles about the Tiger Force that operated in the same section of Vietnam.
Internet search: Toledo Blade: Tiger Force.
- B. Compare the U.S. response to the abuses at Abu Ghraib to the U.S. response at My Lai.
- C. Have the students investigate the International Court, its role with prosecution of war criminals and the official position of the U.S. government toward our military personnel being prosecuted in that setting.
- D. Have the students create a mock court martial for any or all the individuals involved at My Lai.
- E. Have the students generate a list of charges and/or punishments that they would have implemented if they had been in charge.
- F. Have the students discuss what role, if any, that public opinion may have played. Have them conduct an Internet search of newspaper coverage of the My Lai incident and courts martial.

Student Handout 1

Exploring Humanitarian Law, Education modules for young people: Module 2:
Exploration 2B, pages 111 and 112.

What are the basic rules of international humanitarian law?

1 Attacks must be limited to combatants and military targets.
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- 1.1 Civilians may not be attacked.
- 1.2 Civilian objects (houses, hospitals, schools, places of worship, cultural or historic monuments, etc.) may not be attacked.
- 1.3 Using civilians to shield military targets is prohibited.
- 1.4 It is prohibited for combatants to pose as civilians.
- 1.5 Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited.
- 1.6 It is prohibited to attack objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population (foodstuffs, farming areas, drinking water installations, etc.).

2 Attacks or weapons which indiscriminately strike civilian and military objects and persons, and which cause excessive injury or suffering are prohibited.
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- 1.7 It is prohibited to attack dams, dykes or nuclear power plants if such attack may cause severe losses among the civilian population.
- 2.1 Specific weapons are prohibited – chemical and biological weapons, blinding laser weapons, weapons that injure the body by fragments which escape detection by X-rays, poison, anti-personnel land mines, etc.
- 2.2 It is prohibited to order or to threaten that there shall be no survivors.

3 Civilians, wounded combatants, and prisoners should be spared, protected and treated humanely.

- 3.1 No one shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, corporal punishment or cruel or degrading treatment.
- 3.2 Sexual violence is prohibited.
- 3.3 Parties to the conflict must search for and care for enemy wounded and sick who are in their power.

Student Handout 1

- 3.4 It is prohibited to kill or wound an enemy who is surrendering or who is hors de combat.
- 3.5 Prisoners are entitled to respect and must be treated humanely.
- 3.6 Taking hostages is prohibited.
- 3.7 Forced displacement of the civilian population is prohibited. What is called “ethnic cleansing” is prohibited.
- 3.8 People in the hands of the enemy have the right to exchange news with their families and to receive humanitarian assistance (food, medical care, psychological support, etc.).
- 3.9 Vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and nursing mothers, unaccompanied children, the elderly, etc., must be given special protection.
- 3.10 IHL prohibits recruitment and participation in hostilities of children below the age of 15 years.
- 3.11 Everyone is entitled to a fair trial (impartial tribunal, regular procedure, etc.). Collective punishment is prohibited.

4 Military and civilian medical personnel and facilities (hospitals, clinics, ambulances, etc.) must be respected and protected and must be granted all available help for the performance of their duties.
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- 4.1 The red cross or red crescent emblem symbolizes the protection of medical personnel and facilities. Attacks on persons or objects wearing the emblem are prohibited. Using the emblem falsely is prohibited.
- 4.2 Medical units and transports shall not be used to commit acts harmful to the enemy.
- 4.3 In the treatment of the wounded and sick, no priority should be given except on medical grounds.

Student Handout 1

Definitions

collateral damage: Damage or loss caused incidentally during an attack undertaken despite all necessary precautions designed to prevent, or in any event to minimize, loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects

hors de combat: described combatants that have been captured, have been wounded or are sick or shipwrecked and thus are no longer in a position to fight

civilian: any person who is not a combatant (In case of doubt, person shall be considered to be a civilian.)

If and for such time as civilians take a direct part in hostilities, they become combatants and lose their protection.

civilian objects: any objects that are not military targets

If and for such time as civilian objects are used in support of military action, they become military targets and lose their protection.

combatant: person taking direct part in hostilities or member of the armed forces

military targets: combatants and objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose destruction offers a definite military advantage.

Teacher Handout 1

A case study: My Lai – What went wrong? What went right?

My Lai incident – background: Preparation 15 March

Charlie Company (C Company) came to Viet Nam in December, 1967. It was assigned to Quang Ngai Province, an area that U.S. military officials considered to be a Viet Cong stronghold. C Company was a part of Task Force Barker, headed by Lt Col. Frank Barker. It had been organized to rid the area of the Viet Cong (VC), who had been killing off American soldiers with landmines, booby traps and sniper fire in an area known as “Pinkville”. The 120 men of C Company came from all across America and their average age was 20. Their military training had included two hours of instruction on the rights of prisoners and a pocket card: “The enemy in your hands”. In their first three months in Viet Nam, four members of Charlie Company had been killed and 38 wounded.

On 14 March, a booby trap had killed a popular sergeant, blinded another soldier and wounded several others. Feelings of revenge were surely high on the evening of 15 March, when, following the funeral service, Captain Medina, their commanding officer, gave them a pep talk and instructions for their next day’s mission. They would be conducting a large-scale assault in “Pinkville” where their job was to engage the VC’s strong 48th Battalion and destroy the village of My Lai.

Exactly what he said has since been debated. Medina remembers that his goal was to “fire them up and get them ready to go in there; I did not give any instructions as to what to do with women and children in the village”. Some soldiers agree that that is all he did. Others are convinced that his speech ordered them to kill every person in the village.

The assault plan called for the First and Second Platoons to secure the landing zone and then to sweep into the village. Captain Medina and the Army reporter and photographer would arrive with the Third Platoon. From helicopters circling above, the action would be monitored by Lt Col. Barker at 1000 feet and by Gen. Oran Henderson at 2300 feet.

My Lai incident – background: The morning of 16 March

As dawn broke, assault helicopters seeking Viet Cong (VC) peppered the landing area with artillery fire. So when the troop helicopters landed, whatever VC might have been there had probably left. The soldiers encountered no opposition to their arrival.

Men of the Second Platoon caught sight of some Vietnamese running away and opened fire on them. The men lined up and moved into the village. The First Platoon moved into the village, tense and expecting heavy enemy fire. Someone pointed to where he’d seen a “gook” (slang for the enemy). Sgt Mitchell said “Shoot him”, and somebody did.

The killing had begun. A soldier knocked down a feeble old man, slit his throat and tossed him into a well. Once the killing started, it escalated quickly. Some of the men who were reluctant to kill unarmed, unresisting civilians became less inhibited when they

Teacher Handout 1

saw their fellow soldiers doing it. In less than four hours, well over 500 unarmed Vietnamese civilians were slaughtered; their village was completely destroyed.

Teacher Handout 2

A case study: My Lai – What went wrong? What went right?

Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam

(MACV) pocket card

DISTRIBUTION – one to each member of the United States Armed Forces in Viet Nam
(September 1967)

The enemy in your hands

As a member of the U.S. Military Forces, you will comply with the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention of 1949 to which your country adheres. Under this Convention:

You can and will:

- Disarm your prisoner.
- Immediately search him thoroughly.
- Require him to be silent.
- Segregate him from other prisoners.
- Guard him carefully.
- Take him to the place designated by your commander.

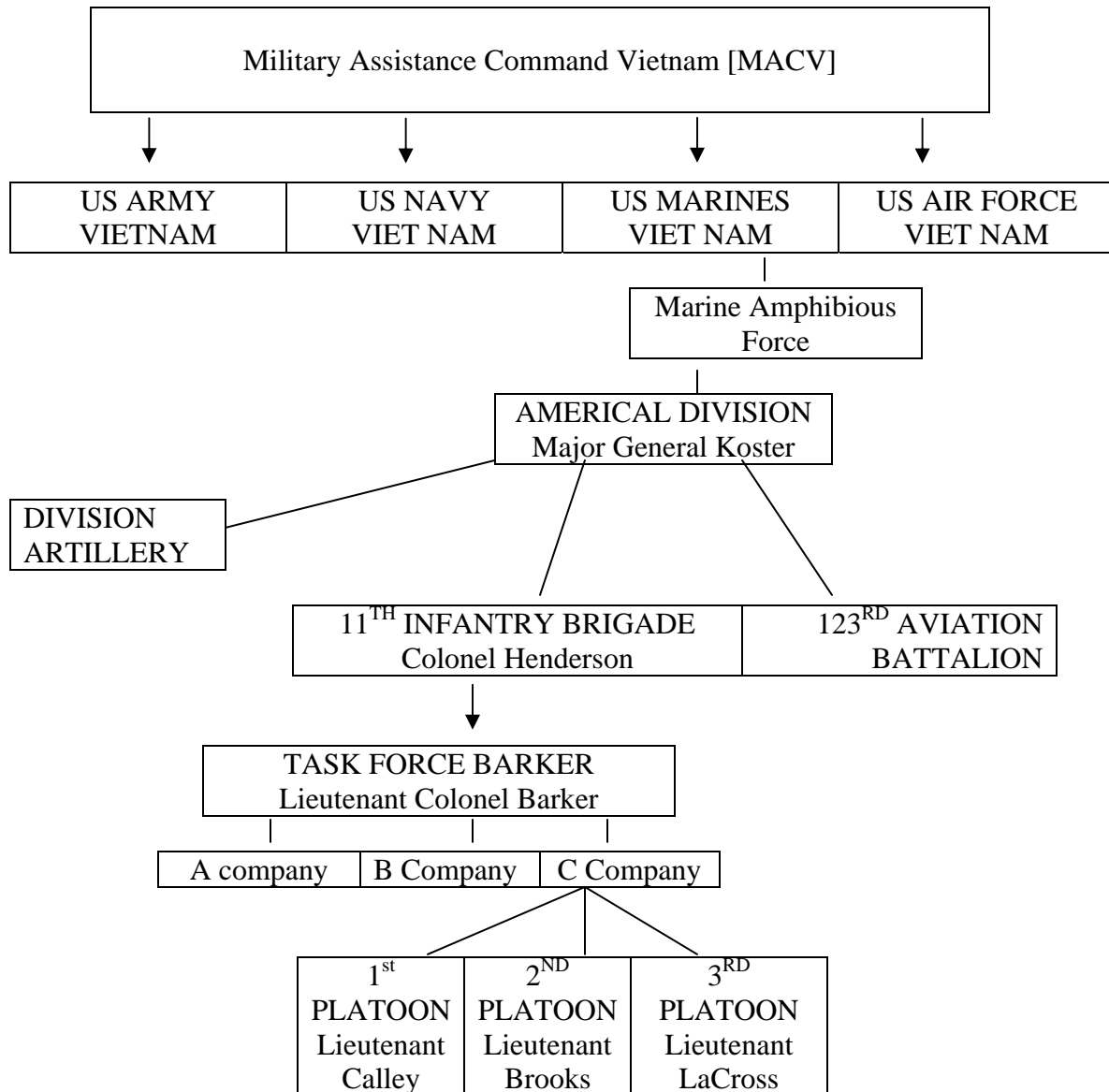
You cannot and must not:

- Mistreat your prisoner.
- Humiliate or degrade him.
- Take any of his personal effects that do not have significant military value.
- Refuse him medical treatment if required and available.

ALWAYS TREAT YOUR PRISONER HUMANELY

Teacher Handout 2

Immediate chain of command at My Lai



Teacher Handout 3

A case study: My Lai – What went wrong? What went right?

What happened cards

<p>What happened: Michael Bernhardt Bernhardt: <i>It was point-blank murder. I just told them the hell with this, I'm not doing it. I didn't think this was a lawful order.</i></p> <p>Bernhardt says that Captain Medina, his company commander, knew that Bernhardt did not participate and also knew that he was a potentially troublesome person. Medina came to him the night after the massacre and said "Bernhardt, you better keep your mouth shut about this".</p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>	<p>What happened: Lieutenant William Calley Lt Calley ordered soldiers in his platoon to round up civilians and shoot them. When soldiers resisted his order to shoot civilians, he began shooting them himself. He also rifle-butted and murdered a monk.</p> <p>Calley: <i>We weren't in My Lai to kill human beings. We were there to kill ideology that is carried by – I don't know. Pawns. Blobs. Pieces of flesh, and I wasn't in My Lai to destroy intelligent men. I was there to destroy an intangible idea, to destroy communism.</i></p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>
<p>What happened: Larry Colburn Colburn agreed with his pilot, Hugh Thompson, to land the helicopter to evacuate Vietnamese victims to safety. Before they could land, they saw American soldiers killing the victims whom they had planned to save. Thompson then landed the helicopter near a bunker where the soldiers were threatening a group of civilians. While Thompson went to attempt to save the civilians, Colburn and the other helicopter gunner protected him by pointing their machine guns at the American soldiers. Thompson told Colburn that if the American soldiers shot at him or at the Vietnamese civilians, the gunners should fire back on the soldiers. Colburn promised he would.</p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>	<p>What happened: Robert Maples Several dozen Vietnamese civilians had been forced into the ditch, many of them sobbing and begging for their lives as they stood next to the piles of bodies of their families and neighbours. Lt Calley announced it was time to get ready to shoot the people; some of the men resisted. Calley directly ordered Robert Maples to load up and start shooting, but Maples refused. Calley then pointed his weapon at Maples, threatening to shoot him for disobeying a direct order. Two or three other GIs stepped in and sided with Maples. Calley fired at the people in the ditch himself.</p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>

Teacher Handout 3

<p>What happened: Ron Haeberle</p> <p>Using his personal camera, Haeberle began taking pictures of executed civilians. As he focused to capture a picture of a wounded four-year old kneeling to take his dead mother's hand, three rifle shots rang out at close range, knocking the small body into the midst of a pile of the dead. The photographer turned to look into the eyes of an 18- or 19-year-old soldier who looked back with a blank stare.</p> <p>Later, a sergeant complained to Haeberle angrily about his taking pictures of the massacre.</p> <p>Haeberle: <i>I think back – Could I have prevented this? How could I have prevented this? And this is a question that I still kind of ask myself today.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?	<p>What happened: Colonel Oran Henderson</p> <p>Because helicopter pilots were sending in complaints of violations, Col. Henderson ordered Capt. Medina to return to the village in the afternoon to investigate exactly how many civilians had been killed. But Gen. Koster countermanded the order. So instead, Henderson gathered the men of Charlie Company and asked them as a group if anyone had been involved in any indiscriminate killing. He later reported to his superiors that all responded "No sir". Many of the men who were there have since testified, however, that they responded "No comment".</p> <p>Three days later, Henderson reported that his investigation was complete and that there had been no indiscriminate killing. Later, in testimony, he denied ever being told anything about his troops wantonly killing large groups of civilians.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Given his command responsibility, what will Col. Henderson do now and why?
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Teacher Handout 3

<p>What happened: Kenneth Hodges Hodges: <i>As a professional soldier, I had been taught to carry out the orders, and at no time had it ever crossed my mind to disobey or to refuse to carry out an order that was issued by my superiors. If one of my men had refused to shoot, (...) he could have faced court martial; he could have been shot on the spot for refusing an order in face of the enemy in face of hostile fire.</i></p> <p><i>I feel that they were able to carry out (...) orders that meant killing small kids, killing women, because they were soldiers. They were trained that when you get into combat it's either you or the enemy. The people that were in that village (...) were all considered the enemy. I feel that we carried out the orders in a moral fashion. The orders of destroying the village, of killing the people in the village – I feel that we carried out our orders, and we did not violate any moral standards.</i></p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>	<p>What happened: Varnado Simpson He saw a woman fleeing, carrying something close to her chest. Was it a gun or explosive device? He opened fire. Her lifeless body dropped. He rolled her over cautiously, afraid she might be a Viet Cong carrying a booby trap. Underneath her was her baby with half his head blown off.</p> <p>Simpson: <i>I knew the women and children were there, but for me to say that I was going to kill them – I didn't know I was going to do that until it happened. I didn't know I was going to kill anyone. I didn't want to kill anyone. I wasn't raised up to kill. I just lost all sense of direction or purpose. I just started killing any kind of way I could kill. It just came. I didn't know I had it in me. But after I killed that child, it just went.</i></p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>
<p>What happened: Captain Ernest Medina Soldiers reported seeing Medina shoot a little boy who was looking for his mother among the dead. They say he also shot a woman and then went close to her to “finish her off”. Another reported that when they came upon a group of men, women and children, Medina said “Kill every one. Leave no one standing”.</p> <p>A soldier who estimates that he himself killed 40 or more civilians said of Capt. Medina “He was right there when it happened. Why didn't he stop it? Medina just kept marching around. He could have put a stop to it anytime he wanted”.</p> <p>➤ What will Capt. Medina do about the massacre and why?</p>	<p>What happened: Fred Widmer Widmer and Capt. Medina came upon a little boy of three or four who was clutching his arm while blood trickled through his fingers. Widmer shot the child.</p> <p>Widmer: <i>This is what haunts me from the whole ordeal down there (...) a boy with his arm shot off, half hanging on; and he just had this bewildered look in his face like “What did I do? What's wrong?” He couldn't comprehend. And – I shot the boy, killed him – and I like to think of it more or less as a mercy killing because someone else would have done it in the end, but it wasn't right.</i></p> <p>➤ What will he do about the massacre and why?</p>

Teacher Handout 3

What happened: Harry Stanley

When Lt. Calley ordered Stanley to shoot civilians who had been herded into a ditch, Stanley refused. “I wasn’t brought up that way, to be killing no women and children. I’m not going to do it”, Stanley said firmly. Calley stuck his M-16 in Stanley’s gut and threatened to kill him. Calley shouted that he wasn’t bluffing. Stanley said he wasn’t bluffing either. “We are all going to die here anyway. I just as soon go out right here and now – but I ain’t killing no women and children”.

Stanley: Lt Calley told me that he was going to have me court-martialed when we got back to base camp. I told him what was on my mind at the time. Ordering me to shoot down innocent people, that’s not an order; that’s craziness to me. And so I don’t feel that I have to obey that. And if you want to court-martial me, then you do that – if you can get away with it. I felt that it was horrible, just a terrible thing to be going on.

- What will he do about the massacre and why?

What happened: Hugh Thompson

Thompson landed his helicopter to evacuate wounded civilians. He met Calley on the ground and argued angrily with him. Calley told him to get back in his helicopter and mind his own business. From the air, Thompson and his crew saw some American soldiers moving in on a terrified group of villagers. He decided to rescue them. He landed and instructed his two-man crew to shoot any of the American soldiers if they opened fire on the civilians as he went to get them out.

Thompson: When I did instruct my crew chief and gunner to open fire on our soldiers if they opened fire on any more civilians (...) I don’t know how I would have felt if they would have done it. But that particular day, I wouldn’t have given it a second thought. They were the enemy at that time, I guess.

Thompson reported to headquarters that he and his crew were seeing widespread killing of civilians at My Lai.

- What will he do now and why?

Teacher Handout 4

A case study: My Lai – What went wrong? What went right?

My Lai incident – afterwards: What happened within the army

Official Army reports stated 128 enemy were killed; one American was wounded; three weapons were seized.

Col. Henderson, the Brigade Commander, made a minimal investigation. (He asked C Company as a group if they saw or committed any violations. He ignored evidence from the recorded radio communications.) He reported that his investigation showed no indiscriminate killing.

Thompson and Colburn reported what they saw to their superiors. Thompson filed an official complaint.

South Vietnamese military who talked to survivors sent reports to President Thieu's government in Saigon; no action was taken and the reports were ignored.

Rumours circulated among American soldiers that something out of the ordinary had happened in My Lai.

Thompson's official report, the radio recordings and the rumours led American Army officials in Washington to send inquiries to the Division command in Viet Nam.

Maj. Gen. Koster then ordered a formal investigation. Based on it, he reported that there had been civilian deaths, but that they had been caused by artillery and gunship strikes that went astray.

Charlie Company was put on purely routine missions.

Calley requested and received a transfer out of Charlie Company.

All records regarding the incident in the possession of the Saigon government and the U.S. Army were lost.

Members of Charlie Company were not interviewed.

Teacher Handout 4

Ron Ridenhour

At 22, Ron Ridenhour was nearing the end of his two-year assignment to Viet Nam. When he heard stories of the massacre, he felt that he had to do something about it. During the remainder of his time in Viet Nam, he tried to gather information by find people who had been there.

I was determined to cause an investigation of some kind. I was a kid. I had no idea how to do it, but I knew the first thing I needed was the facts.

He needed an eyewitness who would be willing to testify. A GI friend who knew what Ridenhour was trying to do located Mike Bernhardt. During their talks, Bernhardt told Ridenhour that when he got out of the Army he planned to track down all the officers in the chain of command responsible for My Lai and assassinate them. Knowing that Bernhardt was upset enough to be serious, Ridenhour offered an alternative.

”Well, you won’t get out for a while”, I said. “So why don’t we try my plan. I’m going to get an investigation going. And if I do, will you tell the truth?” He said, “You tell the truth, I’ll tell the truth”.

When he got out of the Army, Ridenhour composed a letter detailing what he had learned about My Lai. He sent his letter to the country’s military leaders, members of Congress and the President of the United States.

Teacher Handout 5

A case study: My Lai – What went wrong? What went right?

My Lai incident – afterwards: Chronology of results

1969

March: Ridenhour sent his letter to 30 Congressmen, President Nixon, the Department of State and the country's Military Chiefs of Staff.

April: The Army's Chief of Staff turned the case over to the nation's Inspector General for investigation.

September: The Army quietly charged Lt Calley with violating Article 18 of the U.S. Uniform code of Military Justice.

October: A news reporter began research into the incident and published a series of articles.

November: American news media brought public attention to the massacre, including Haeberle's shocking photographs and a television interview with a soldier who had been there and killed civilians.

The court martial of Lt Calley began; he was charged with 109 counts of murder.

Some politicians urged holding open independent investigations as well; others argued that it was all an attempt to undermine the American war effort and sacrifices of the armed forces in Viet Nam.

President Nixon ordered a closed-door investigation by the U.S. military, headed by a respected three-star general, William Peers.

1970

March: The Peers Report recommended courts martial for 28 officers in addition to faulting Haeberle for contributing to a cover-up of violations at My Lai.

Capt. Medina was charged with the murder of 175 Vietnamese civilians.

Fourteen other officers, who were not present at My Lai, were charged with suppressing information relating to the massacre. The charges included dereliction of duty, failure to obey lawful regulations and false sworn testimony.

November: A court martial of Sgt David Mitchell resulted in acquittal.

1971

January: Courts martial of Sgt Charles Hutto and Eugene Kotouac ended in acquittal.

Teacher Handout 5

February: Charges against officers who had not been physically present at My Lai were dropped.

Col. Henderson was charged with participating in a cover-up of war crimes at My Lai.

March: Lt Calley was found guilty of murdering 22 “infants, children, women and old men, and of assault with intent to murder a child of about two years of age”.

He was dishonourably discharged and sentenced to life at hard labour in prison.

April: President Nixon (as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces) ordered that Calley be released from prison and put under house arrest in his home.

August: The court martial trial of Capt. Medina began.

The court martial trial of Col. Henderson began.

The General of the 3rd Army reduced Calley’s life sentence to 20 years.

September: Capt. Medina was acquitted of all charges.

December: Col. Henderson was acquitted of all charges.

1973

December: The U.S. Military Court of appeals upheld Calley’s conviction.

1974

February: Calley was granted bail of \$1,000.

April: The Secretary of the Army further reduced Calley’s sentence to 10 years.

June: The U.S. Court of Appeals overturned the bail order and returned Calley to disciplinary barracks.

November: The Secretary of the Army released Calley on parole.

Teacher Handout 6

Assessment / Evaluation Questions

Questions:

- Why do people violate International Humanitarian Law? Include specific examples.
- Which rules are most often violated and why?
- Who is responsible for seeing that International Humanitarian Law is respected?
- What dilemmas do combatants face?
- Describe a difficult choice that a soldier might have to make in a combat situation. What is the dilemma? What are the consequences?
- Give two examples of one violation leading to another.
- What is the effect of not knowing who is a civilian?
- What is the value of having a just law that is often broken?
- What were two dilemmas facing soldiers at My Lai?